1489. r. 76.

L. Beaufort

LETTERS, &c.

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MAY

LETTERS

OF AN

IMPARTIAL OBSERVER,

ON

The Affairs of Ireland.

ADDRESSED TO A GENTLEMAN IN DUBLIN.

DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR T. CLARKE, M.DCC.XCIII.

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MAY

LETTER I.

DEAR SIR,

ACCEPT my thanks for your communication, on the very important topics, which now agitate the capital; but I cannot entirely coincide in opinion with you:—The admiſſion of the Catholic people of Ireland to the privileges, or rights of citizens, which ever term pleaſes you moſt, I have long conſidered as a matter of great national advantage; I cannot now abandon my opinion, becauſe ſome perſons acting in their name, have been vain, injudicious, intemperate, and becauſe others have been downright ſeditious.—I do not conſider the merit of the claimants, or even the advantage of the Catholics themſelves, except, ſo far as it is involved in that of the kingdom; even altho' no perſon had ſolicited in their behalf, we, who are attached to ſubordination, ought to have invited the Catholics

tholics as auxiliaries, and not have left them a prey to every diſhoneſt or inconſiderate innovator.—Whilſt wild ſpeculations roam abroad, it is not alone a policy, but a duty, to reſcue them from temptation; for they love the king, and are, by principle, and the genius of their religion, attached to order and regularity.—They deſire the conſtitution, why ſhould they not have it? The deſire is natural, and it is an evidence of their rectitude of intention and ſound judgment; let them in god's name get it, ere they adopt novel ſpeculations.—I know that here your fears for the ſafety of the church interpoſe; I ſhould equally be alarmed, if I apprehended that the preſent eſtabliſhment was not ſtill to predominate; I think there are many things in the diſcipline of the church of Rome, which diſqualify her from rule; we only diſagree upon the meaſure of freedom, which we think may be ſafely indulged to ſubordinate ſects. Do not provoke the people, and the church will outlive every man now in being; for the object is not adequate to the riſk of overturning it; but if, by the refuſal of a juſt demand, we goad the people to overt acts of diſcontent, they will have church and ſtate and conſtitution in ſpite of us.

Let parliament prove equitable, and compliant to the Catholics; ſtill there remains to the eſtabliſhment, exactly the ſame ſecurity, by which every

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every other branch of the conſtitution, is fenced and protected.—The advantages of order, and the inconvenience of anarchy, are the bonds by which every government is kept together; what can prevent the crown to attack the liberties of the people? The ariſtocracy to endeavour the ſubverſion of popular freedom? Or the people to riſe in oppoſition to the ariſtocracy? each of theſe attempts muſt prove ſufficiently flattering to the wiſhes of the reſpective parties, each has ſtrength to make the effort, but not to enſure ſucceſs; and in caſe of failure, perſonal ſafety, and happineſs are the forfeit.—Thus the preſent order of things is preſerved, becauſe the intereſt of men is a counterpoiſe to their paſſions.

I have converſed with the Catholics of every rank in this kingdom, and in every part of it; and I pronounce them the men in Europe, who are moſt fit to enjoy rational liberty, and leſs tainted with the infamous and deteſtable opinions, which in the preſent age have been let looſe to ſcourge mankind.—If evil intentioned men pervert this excellent cauſe to ſeditious purpoſes, and commit reprehenſible acts in the name of this excellent people, are they to ſuffer? But you ſay they do not diſavow this conduct, true, and they evince their wiſdom; it is judicious in a people, whom we do not ſeem over deſirous to gratify, to preſerve neutrality; why ſhould they ſuffer themſelves

ſelves, to be whiſtled up to ſtill our alarms. The Catholics do not owe any duty of interference, further than is neceſſary to preſerve their own happineſs and properties.

A very conſiderable degree of irritation has been excited in the public mind; when I look into the cauſes of it, I obſerve the great Catholic body of this kingdom the only perſons whom I can completely exempt from criminality.—The caſe of the Roman Catholics was brought before the public about a year ago, in a maſterly piece of reaſoning, very cool; and very circumſpect, entitled, The Declaration of the Catholic Society. A ſcholar might have reſpected the ſtile, a man of ſenſe might have admitted the argument; yet, if a plan of univerſal maſſacre had been detected, the conſternation and horror could not have been more general.—By this firſt Catholic act of ſpirit, like a true popiſh miracle, all the ſickly members of the conſtitution on a ſudden were reſtored to vigour; corporations long dumb, recovered the bleſſing of ſpeech; and decriped counties leaped from their couches to magnify the Proteſtant aſcendancy. There appears to me to have been much vehemence and little prudence in this conduct. I paſs over the bungling of the Catholics of Dublin laſt winter, under the guidance of Mr. R. Burke, whom they engaged for the ſeaſon, as a kind of Prime Miniſter,

ter, or Politician Laureat, to ſpeak to great men and write pamphlets.—The haſty proceedings of parliament upon their petition; I hope, alſo may, on both ſides, be forgotten; there is ſurely too much ſenſe in the country to dread a repetition of the experiment.—The next agitating circumſtance was a letter, ſigned by Mr. Byrne, merchant, in Dublin, which I have frequently read, for it was circulated not all obſcurely, or with any ſeeming intention of reſerve or ſecrecy.

Here I heſitate whether to admire the temerity of the project, or the folly of its approvers. A convention was proclaimed through the kingdom, as if by ſound of trumpet, and its rendezvous appointed exactly under the beard of the exiſting government. Inſtead of endeavouring to collect the ſenſe of thoſe Catholics, who had any tie or qualification of property, the entire people were called upon to elect, firſt parochial and then county delegates; I find that the prudence of the provincial Catholics induced them in general to diſregard this mandate, and to appoint their committee-men by private nomination. To their judgment and coolneſs muſt it be attributed that this affair of Mr. Byrne created no diſturbance. If the ſummons iſſued from Dublin had been uniformly complied with, it muſt have unſettled the order of the country, by ſetting looſe political

ſpeculation among thoſe who continually exclaim, Can we be worſe than we are? and who, if once they catch the idea of ſummary redreſs, will be likely not to wait with patience for that progreſſive relief, they are likely to obtain from the natural improvement of our commerce and conſtitution.

The mode of election was novel in the country, and borrowed from a nation, the atrocity of whoſe conduct ſtigmatizes all its proceedings. With the mangled corſe of butchered France before our eyes, warning every reaſonable man to beware of popular proceeding, the people was called to act upon a ſcheme of the moſt popular nature poſſible, and familiarized to forms the moſt adverſe to the genius of the conſtitution, when the purpoſe would have been equally anſwered, and the ſenſe of the people as irreſiſtibly conveyed, by a mode of proceeding far leſs popular and more conſiſtent with the forms of that ſociety, which we wiſh to live under.

This was a theatre for the grand juries to act on; they might have added a cenſure on thoſe perſons in the metropolis, who not content with having announced their claim to the nation, are eternally heaping freſh provocatives upon the public mind; interfering wherever they can intrude, poſting through the country even to places

in which their faces are unknown, as if in preparation for hoſtility. Upon theſe reprehenſible objects the public bodies ſhould have directed their thunders, but all this they omitted, and by an act of the groſſeſt abſurdity, they adjudged the claim and libelled the loyalty of an entire people, becauſe forſooth half a dozen ſilly, miſguided citizens of Dublin choſe to put themſelves to ſome expence in chaiſe hire * and printing.

During theſe proceedings, ſkirmiſhed in the wings of the battle, The *Society of United Iriſhmen*, a virtuous body, which perhaps may have aſſumed that appellation, like lucus a non lucendo, from its laudable exertions to create diſturbance; the general character of the publications with which this ſociety has enriched the literature of Ireland, has been, unmeaning, vapid, unargumentative and bombaſtic; man in their ſchool appears under a new deſignation, and they ſeem to have invented for him a definition which eſcaped the ſagacity of ancient and modern philoſophers; he is no longer, bipes animal implume, nor, animal riſibile, nor, animal rationale, nor, animal coquens, but a *legiſlating animal;* ſubordinate to this is every function, every enjoyment, every neceſſity.—According to them, we are

* I have been, ſince I wrote this, informed by a Catholic gentleman, that theſe expences are defrayed out of a public fund.

are ſent into this world, not to love and ſerve god, as is ſaid by divines; not to improve our faculties, as is enjoined by philoſophers; not, as moraliſts inculcate, to diſcharge the ſocial duties of relationſhip and mutually to cheriſh, and conſole each other, but for the ſole purpoſe of electing members of parliament. When I read for the firſt time theſe vague, ſilly, ranting declamations about liberty, which iſſued from the United Iriſhmen, I imagined them to have been the production of ſome forward boys, whom the maſter of an academy had thought fit to exerciſe at compoſition, and ſuggeſted as a proper ſubject for their themes, that they ſhould expatiate on freedom; the eſſays ſeemed to me preſented to the world in promiſe of future exertion, as imitations of the ſpectator were ſome years back by the pupils of Eton College. The late ridiculouſly famous addreſs to the volunteers has ſoared above that key.

I ſhould gladly know from any reaſonable man, for what motive the Iriſh at this hour ſhould take arms? The country is in a ſtate of progreſſive improvement; the free trade has not had time completely to operate, and the Popery Laws, which reſtrict its operation, are not yet removed. But the country is in a ſtate of conciliation, and

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the Popery Laws, there is little doubt, muſt fall. —After this event human fancy cannot picture a more brilliant ſcene of happineſs than what opens to Ireland. This proſpect, the United Iriſhmen, if any perſon would liſten to them, are deſirous to blaſt, either from ill deſigns, or want of foreſight, or probably, dreading a concluſion to the preſent queſtion, ere they, good men, can put their ſickle in the harveſt.

Such is the evil of this disfranchiſement of the Catholics, that any men who wiſh from error in judgment, or private intereſt, to excite a ferment, have only to cook their liberty and equality, or any other nonſenſe they import, with the real grievance of four millions;—The foreign ſauce is made palatable by the ſubſtantial and well known fare that accompanies it. And will you, therefore, perſevere in this disfranchiſement, Becauſe there are ſeditious men in the nation will you drive honeſt ſubjects into their arms? Becauſe the United Iriſhmen are inſane, and becauſe ſome few Catholics in Dublin are intemperate, you will puniſh an entire people;—Indeed it would be more politic and juſt to let the public acts of the Catholic nation redeem the metropolis.

Their merit is more than paſſive, I have read the publications of the other towns, the metropolis

polis is inferior to all, not alone in moderation, but in ſenſe and ſtile, in argument and eloquence. Thoſe who will not look further than the capital (excuſe the groſſneſs of the compariſon), recall to my mind an anecdote of the great Ganganelli; being at one time informed that an Engliſhman at Rome declined the honour of being preſented at the papal court, from the recollection of the vices of John the twenty-ſecond, "he reſembles" replied the Pope, "a pig in a flower-garden, who paſſes by the ſweets, to nuzzle a ſirreverence."

So far am I from thinking favorably of reſtrictive laws in general, that if I happened to be in the cabinet of an arbitrary monarch, I ſhould deſire him to eſtabliſh a free government in his dominions; the expence of adminiſtration is leſs, and the obedience obtained greater; by giving authority to the great, and influence to the people, he engages them all in his ſupport, and raiſes up ſo many champions even for the payment of taxes in every diſtrict; if a government ſets out with force, every thing muſt be conducted on the ſame principle, at enormous expence; —The King of England enjoys as much perſonal authority and perſonal happineſs, as any monarch in Europe.

It appears to me, a ſtranger in a great degree to this buſineſs, but one, who has converſed with the people and endeavoured accurately to diſcern the real ſtate of the country, that the grievances of the Catholics are too real to become properly the ſubject of experiment;—A man of rank, who caſually viſits the provinces, and who obſerves the people often fat, and ſometimes comfortable, will not immediately diſcern that they are ſubject from the want of franchiſe to great inconveniences, and that it is an everlaſting drawback on the public happineſs. There is in Ireland a vaſt fund of ſolid diſcontent, which ought to be removed, becauſe any man, when he thinks fit, may ſend it into circulation, and procure currency for himſelf by doing ſo.—We have before us evidences in point.—At this moment an open and avowed conteſt is pending between his majeſty's government in this kingdom, and a ſcore or a dozen men denominated the committee, or ſub-committee, of the Catholics of Ireland;—When theſe perſons appear before the public, no ſtation ſeems ſacred from their inſults. This conduct, I preſume, cannot even be acceptable to the great body which ſuffers, I underſtand, rather than authorizes them to bear its name and enſigns. That they have not among them underſtanding, information, or talents, appears evident from the neceſſity they are under of hiring men, every year, to read and write for them.

Indeed,

Indeed, being induced by curioſity to enquire the names of perſons, who buſtle ſo notably, I find amongſt them ſome, who neither are, nor ought to be known beyond the ſtreets of their reſpective reſidence; ſome not reſpected, and others not thought of, even in the commerce of the metropolis; yet theſe perſons not only attract the mob, but procure for followers many men of conſideration in the country,—What further proof of the reality of the grievances, or of the pitiable ſtate of the country is neceſſary? I put it to every man of property, does he think himſelf ſecure in a country, in which any one may conjure up a ſtorm when it ſuits his intereſt? will monied men depoſit their fortunes with us whilſt we are in this condition? Will land be worked to its full improvement? We are not to ſlight the object of theſe perſons, becauſe we deſpiſe their perſons; if, from the juſtneſs of the demand they make, and the number intereſted, that their requiſition be acceded to, they can procure followers; they are formidable, in proportion as they want character, and are deficient in the ordinary reſources for procuring notice; as a ruſty, ragged dagger, if it will pierce, wounds more ſeverely than a poliſhed bayonet.

In this condition it is not a penalty, but a premium to the turbulent, that thoſe grievances continue in exiſtence. For thus men procure notice

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who otherwiſe would have lurked in the back ground of ſociety, limited to what was their natural deſtination, to fling their hats in the air, and huzza for liberty. If the queſtion remain much longer in ſuſpenſe, inſtead of three or four, you will have every liberty weaver a ſtateſman, but repeal the popery laws, and mark the magic force with which, le roi le veut, will in that caſe operate; not the ſacred transformation in the family of Lot, nor the fabulous one of Niobe, nor the comic necromancy of Harlequin, will produce an effect more inſtantaneous; preſto! a band of turbulent, ſelf-important politicians, will dwindle into forlorn and forgotten cockneys. *

Whilſt the Catholics did not reflect, it was no difficult matter in any way to rule them. At that time they were only rich, but they think; there are amongſt them men of talents, who have eluded your laws, and become alſo men of information. Unleſs they have, in the peace of the country, an intereſt equal to that of their fellow citizens, they ever will be ready to admit any ſeditious doctrine, to countenance every ſeditious man, and to join in every ſeditious purpoſe. How can they be ex-

* See Note at the end.

pected to ſupport the conſtitution, whilſt that conſtitution eſtabliſhed the excluſion of themſelves, as a fundamental principle? three or four millions can have what conſtitution they think proper, or elſe they can eternally worry thoſe who obſtruct them. Are diſcontented men, not at any period to ariſe in this kingdom? ſhall neither intereſt nor principle produce this effect? is it wiſe to compliment ſuch men, by giving them the body of the people, tied hands and feet, with an injunction to try upon them every experiment, which may be ſuggeſted by diſſatisfaction?

My advice and wiſhes proceed to a bold abrogation of the laws againſt the Catholics, or if that be not feaſible, to ſome meaſure which will eſtabliſh perfect impartiality, between all the different deſcriptions of men, in the low orders of ſociety; neither am I very clear, whether this end might not be nearly as well anſwered by curtailing the franchiſe, as by extending it. I ſee this queſtion in a point of view very different from what it has hitherto been preſented. In other countries, where a few, from caprice or ſcruple, quit the national church, it is benevolence and philoſophy to indulge them: in this kingdom, a minority inveſted with the power of the ſtate, holds the ballance between two great ſects, which, notwithſtanding ſome boaſted

alliances

alliances of late, would if this member of the triumvirate were removed, deluge the land with blood, in a conteſt for pre-eminence; the body of the nation are involved in the accident of diſſent, and when we talk of giving immunities to diſſenters, we are eſtabliſhing in fact the privileges of the people. I eſpouſe the cauſe of this body of the nation, not becauſe they are Catholics, for as ſuch, I mean them neither good, nor ill; but becauſe, firſt, they are the yeomanry of the country; and ſecondly, they are of too much importance in the empire, to leave to them good grounds of diſſatisfaction; and thirdly, they contain excellent materials for an orderly and well regulated ſociety. Upon the ſtate of the peaſantry, of every country, depends the ſtate of the country itſelf; in proportion as this order is unconſtrained, it is induſtrious; and in proportion as it is induſtrious, the country flouriſhes in wealth, population and happineſs; whether it be by giving the right of ſuffrage to the Catholics, or by any other means, which ſuperior ingenuity may deviſe; ſome ſtep ought to be taken, in this country, to communicate to the peaſantry, a more elevated caſt of character. We confound ourſelves in a labyrinth about taxes and reform, and wander from objects of cloſer neceſſity and greater importance; taxes always muſt be paid, and a reform

would not render us one whit better than we are; the grand deſideratum, in Ireland, is the want of a yeomanry, in three provinces. Never did a country thrive, unleſs where the low orders feel themſelves in a great meaſure independant, only bound by the law, and alone paying reſpect to it. I preſent my project for procuring this ſtate of mind, let the privilege of ſuffrage be placed within the reach of every man, who has induſtry to acquire it. Toleration with us is the neceſſary of life, elſewhere it is but luxury. Thus you ſee, I do not take my ground with almoſt any of my predeceſſors in this diſcuſſion. Not with the Catholics themſelves, who rant about ſlavery, as tho' they lived under the tyrants on the coaſt of Africa, who are ſaid to feed their favorite vultures with the fleſh of their ſubjects; * nor with the citizens of Belfaſt, who ſeem to have for object, to ſeduce the Catholics into a revolution, and to draw a republic out of the ſcramble. Nor am I with Mr. Butler's ſociety which means a great deal; nor with the Duke of Leinſter's filiation of monks of the ſcrew, from the parent ſtock of the Whig-club, which ſeems to mean little more than that,

* One of the Catholic champions, in a pamphlet lately publiſhed, has diſcovered a new Elyſium, the right of voting; thus Mahomet, intent on his favorite propenſity, makes future happineſs conſiſt in a paradiſe of women; but the prophet is not ſo abſurd as the politician.

that, His Grace is a Chairman, and Mr. Griffith a Secretary. As to the means, which the ſoi diſant adherents, and partizans of the Catholics think proper to employ; to me they are immaterial; I argue the queſtion upon national utility. I am not the apologiſt of Mr. John Keogh, hurling defiance from his ſhop in Dame Street, againſt the King's government; nor of the National guards; nor of the Proclamation to arm; nor of the Belfaſt convention; nor of ſpeechifying, or Republicaniſm; but if the great body of the people had not good cauſe to murmur, all theſe menaces and declamations would be conſidered, as innocent or ridiculous recreations; it is the well founded diſſatisfaction of three millions, which ſanctions temerity and makes folly formidable. The neutrality, much more the approbation, of the Catholic people, enables any man who pleaſes, to interrupt the peace and credit of the metropolis. And are the miſled and miſleading, who are the ſole actors in intemperance, puniſhed by continuing the country in this condition? ſurely not, grievance is their harveſt, and they obtain a premium, when the period of its exiſtence is protracted.

But the legiſlature will indeed act wiſely, if ſeparating the end from the means, it concedes liberally

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to the Catholics. Without a miracle the popery laws cannot ſtand long. They were laid in a peculiarity of circumſtances, which are altered; the baſis being removed, the ſuperſtructure muſt follow it. The Catholics diſcuſs political queſtions; they read, they meet, they know the ſtrength of the Country, and of each other; they compare political ſentiments; Ireland muſt drop of courſe from the Empire, if this body be driven into the arms of the party which aims at the ſeparation. Purſue a contrary conduct and conciliate them. Then the United Iriſhmen may tumble, to amuſe the public, until the new theatre be completed, or in the interval of Aſtley's entertainments. Then may that virtuous body ſound the tocſin to arms, without provoking more than ridicule; Belfaſt may then make us laugh by toaſting its miſeries in Claret, pitiouſly bewailing the days of civil war, when oaten bread, (and very little of it) in a Camp, was the nouriſhment of our Anceſtors, and wiſh the return thereof, to be borne to them by the approaching National Convention. Gentlemen think that they ſerve the popular cauſe, by extravagancies of this nature, exactly the reverſe; they compel moderate men to eſpouſe the party of adminiſtration; becauſe it is connected with peace and order, and to forget whatever is reprehenſible

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in miniſters, or objectionable in the Conſtitution, in favor of a ſuperior obligation, the neceſſity of preſerving the quiet of the country. And as to this ſame Parliamentary reform, which is the pretext of ſo much agitation, I think it very problematical whether any good whatever is to be derived from it; I have already ſtated where I think the evil lies. The repeal of the popery laws, immediate or progreſſive, and the influx of wealth, which our commerce is, even at this hour, drawing to the country, will render of courſe our Parliament much more independant than it now is, perhaps as much ſo, as is attainable in our ſtate of manners. When we are better men, we ſhall have a better form of government, let us not ſeek perfection in fæce Romuli.

The grand-jury-ceſſes for road-jobbing, fall more heavily on the poor of Ireland than the taxes impoſed by Parliament, I ſhould like to ſee this evil reformed, but as it does not open an avenue to power, I dread it will not be attempted. I ſhould be more pleaſed to hear that a bureau was opened to receive propoſals, for working our coal mines, and thus ſupplying the country with fuel on reaſonable terms, than for the ſpeculations of political Alchymiſts, who will not eaſily diſcover the ſpell to make our conſtitution perfect.

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I do not diſcern ſo much evil in the election, as in the game laws. And I ſuggeſt a ſociety for encouraging the poor, and protecting them againſt petty acts of oppreſſion, under which they bend; againſt village exaction to which they yield their ſouls, as the moſt patriotic inſtitution that can be deviſed in Ireland. This hint I hope will not fall in vain; the object is not beneath the notice of the Duke of Leinſter, and not without the pale of his character and intentions.

I have the honor to be, Dear Sir,

Your very humble Servant.

NOTE.

NOTE.

The Dialogue which Shakeſpeare puts in the mouth of the Kentiſh inſurgents, is ſo very appoſite to modern Painiſm, and to ſome proceedings thereon, that I cannot avoid quoting it at large.

Second Part of Henry 6th, ſcene 2d. act 4th.

Enter George Bevis and John Holland.

Bevis, I tell thee *Jack Cade* the clothier, means to dreſs the Common-wealth, and turn it and ſet a new nap on it.

Holland, So he had need for 'tis thread bare. Well I ſay it was never merry world in England ſince gentlemen came up.

Bevis, O Miſerable age, Virtue is not regarded in handicraft men.

Holland, The nobility think ſcorn to go in leather aprons.

Bevis, Nay more the King's council are no good workmen.

Holland, True, and yet it is ſaid labour in thy vocation, which is as much as to ſay, as let the magiſtrate be laboring men, and therefore ſhould we be magiſtrates.

Bevis. Thou haſt hit it, for there is no better ſign of a brave mind than a hard hand.

Enter Jack Cade, Dick the *Butcher, Smith* the *Weaver,* and a *Sawyer,* with infinite numbers.

Jack Cade, Be brave, for your Captain is brave, and vows Reformation. There ſhall be in England, ſeven halfpenny loaves for a penny, the three hooped Pot ſhall have ten hoops; and I will make it felony to drink ſmall beer; *all the Realm ſhall be in Common,* and in Cheapſide ſhall my palfry go to graſs, *and when I am King, as King I will be,* there ſhall be no money, all ſhall eat and drink at my ſcore, and I will apparel them all in one Livery, that they may agree like brothers, and worſhip me as their Lord. *(Vide a late ſimilar publication from Belfaſt.)*

Dick, The firſt thing we'll do, let us Kill all the lawyers.

Jack Cade, Nay that I mean to do. Is not this a lamentable thing, that the ſkin of an innocent Lamb ſhould be made parchment, that parchment ſcribbled o'er ſhould undo a man.

Enter

Enter ſome, bringing the Clerk of Chatham.

Smith, The Clerk of Chatham, he can read and write and caſt accompt.

Jack Cade, O Monſtrous!

Smith, We took him ſetting boys copies.

Jack Cade, Here's a villain!

Smith, He's a book in his pocket with red letters in it.

Jack Cade, Nay, then he's a conjurer.

Dick, Nay he can make obligations, and write court hand.

Jack Cade, I'm ſorry for it, come hither ſirrah, I muſt examine thee, What's thy name?

Clerk, Emmanuel.

Dick, T'will go hard with you.

Jack Cade, Let me alone—Doſt thou uſe to write thy name, or haſt thou a mark to thyſelf, like an honeſt plain dealing man?

Clerk,

Clerk, Sir I thank God, I have been so well brought up, I can read and write.

All—He hath confessed, away with him, he's a villain and a traitor.

Jack Cade, Away with him I say: hang him up with his pen and ink-horn about his neck.

END of the FIRST LETTER.

1489.r.76.

LETTERS

OF AN

IMPARTIAL OBSERVER,

ON THE

Present State of Affairs in Ireland.

ADDRESSED TO A GENTLEMAN IN DUBLIN.

LETTER THE SECOND.

CONTAINING

Strictures on the *Earl* of *Westmorland's* Conduct to the *Roman Catholics.*

DUBLIN:

PRINTED FOR T. CLARKE,
And Sold at *Faulkner's Head*, No. 5, *College-Green.*

1793.

BRITISH MUSEUM
30
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MAY

LETTER II.

DEAR SIR,

IT appears to me, that the deſire of ſelf-importance is the pivot, upon which all human exertions turn; to this ruling paſſion, I trace, the patriot's zeal, the courtier's ſuppleneſs. If this propoſition be allowed, it will eaſily appear, that there is in Ireland, either a vaſt deal too much, or a vaſt deal too little democracy. The multitude excluded from the Theatre of politics, are not only denied the gratification of this favorite propenſity, but mortified, by ſeeing that it is indulged to others. Either the Temple ought to be ſcreened from vulgar obſervers, or admiſſion ought to be more promiſcuous. Holding as a ſacred opinion, that, a certain degree of popular privilege is eſſential, to the ſecurity of private happineſs, and a great degree, indiſpenſable for the advancement of public welfare, I am of opinion, that we are not ſufficiently democratic; I therefore urge the admiſſion of the qualified Catholics, not on account of their religion, party or complexion; all of which, appear to me equally feeble pretexts for reward or penalty. As they are in the country, and cannot be got out of it,

they ought to be made ſomething; what they are, at preſent, is prepoſterous. The great object is, to draw the people, as near as poſſible to a level, in the article of political privileges; the moſt effectual means would be to concede extenſively to thoſe who have them not; the next beſt, *(ſed longo proximus intervallo)* to abridge the number of thoſe who have. And perhaps it would prove the beſt reform of our Repreſentation to limit, not augment the number of electors, who muſt from ſituation be neceſſarily dependant. For the greateſt apparent democracy, is the greateſt real ariſtocracy. The people in every country, have a ſtrong inclination to ſupport the upper, againſt the middle orders. It eaſily may be accounted for; we are very prone to preſs on thoſe beneath us; the weight felt by the poor is that of the rank immediately above them, and they are conſoled to obſerve, that their not very gentle Lords have ſuperiors, to whom they muſt bow in turn. If France ſeems to have deviated from this rule; it is that France had not really a natural ariſtocracy.

Property, moreover will have its influence; the kindneſs of a landlord, and the means of coercion which he poſſeſſes in caſe of ingratitude, will influence a tenantry beyond every other conſideration. I am aſtoniſhed, that the Proteſtant landed proprietors of this kingdom, do not more clearly perceive the neceſſary effects upon their own intereſt, if the monopoly in favor of the inferior Proteſtants were aboliſhed, and a complete equality of political advantages eſtabliſhed. Surely no propoſition is more plainly demonſtrable than this, that if the condition of the tenantry were improved, as it would

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would be if this propoſal were acceded to; or that the right of ſuffrage was, with its advantages, placed indiſcriminately, within the reach of their induſtry, it would prove to that order a great encouragement; and that if ſo encouraged they would till the ground better, and pay their rents better, and become manufacturers, and grow into a warm, and comfortable ſituation; which they never can, whilſt oppreſſed by little tyrants armed with authority, derived from their excluſive right of voting. But equalize this right, and not Mr. Richard Burke juſtifying mobbiſh elections, and breaking the connexion that ought to ſubſiſt between the different orders; nor the United Iriſhmen calling to arms; nor the Jacobins* of Belfaſt ſighing devoutly for a National Convention, nor the Sub-Committee of the Catholics of Ireland ſeconding the pious wiſh, becauſe they adopt means, which are calculated to defeat the end of Catholic emancipation which they profeſs themſelves deſirous to accompliſh, will prevent this nation from being rich, happy and united. For the criterion of every country's happineſs is the ſtate of the peaſantry; make them flouriſh, and from them health and riches will ſhoot throughout the land; ſupply the root, and the upper branches will fructify.

I have the honor of an acquaintance of thirty-five years with Mr. Edmond Burke, I love the man and coincide with the greateſt part of his principles; I regret with the tenderneſs of an old friend, that his only ſon ſeems renegade from his favorite opinions. Whilſt Mr. E. Burke in England,

* A Club eſtabliſhed at Belfaſt by this name.

land, calls for a coalition of all parties, Mr. R. Burke posts thro' Ireland, to set the people at loggerheads. It was profanation in the father's eyes, to have touched a single stone of "the King's Castle in Paris" the stew of despotism; but it is commendable in the son's opinion, to insult "the King's Castle" in Dublin, the seat of a mild government. Mr. E. Burke could scarcely find epithets sufficiently harsh, to defame the National Assembly of France, because it admitted certain men, from the learned and mercantile professions, and from the body of farmers, probably the selection of all these orders; Mr. R. Burke discovers, that the business of a nation may be admirably managed by the middle class of Dublin shopkeepers;* (for they, it is said, compose a majority of this Committee) men not that I can learn distinguished for literature or talents; and who seem to receive a man's credit upon change, as evidence of his virtue, information and political sagacity. In France, where some form of election was necessary, Mr. E. Burke stigmatizes the double mode with the bitterest censure. In Ireland, where the people had a good mode of proceeding by counties, and a very excellent manner of election by freeholders, which the Catholics might imitate; and where the circumstances of the country rendered this novelty highly improper, Mr. R. Burke is the panegyrist of the men who introduce the uncouth fashion, and even applauds it. Mr. E. Burke deplores the effect of popular interference, Mr. R. Burke sanctions, and commends, a measure, which

* Mr. R. Burke indignant that he should be deemed "the Lord Ambassador, sent from a sort of tinkers to the King" insists very much, in a pamphlet I have read of his, that these persons have sense, money, and importance; as to the latter transubstantiation is more easy of belief; by importing him, they have shewn, that they possess less, of the first, than of the second.

is

is very likely to lead to it, or which at leaſt, clears the way very much for, the perſonal interpoſition of the " the ſwiniſh multitude." For if the people of this country be called from the plough, and ſpade, to elect *parochial delegates*;* and their curioſity being well excited, pop comes, (diſtributed gratis) a circular letter of the Catholic Committee, bewailing the want of the elective franchiſe; and then pop, another piece of gratuitous information, which collecting with genealogical accuracy, all the relatives of a noble family, to the third and fourth generation, acquaints the commonality of Ireland, that the combined income of theſe reſpectable perſons, amounts to five hundred pounds a day; and then a letter from the United Iriſhmen about Liberty and Equality; and then the orations of the orators in Exchequer-ſtreet, not like honeſt men, claiming their juſt rights, and offering peace, and conciliation; but rather high life below ſtairs, a ſaturnalia of ſlaves, aſſembled to abuſe their maſters, by the favor of General Dumourier's victories. And laſt of all, the National Guards, with their buttons, and their uniform, and their big hats. If all theſe circumſtances be heaped one upon the other, are not the parochial elections, which Mr. Byrne recommended, and Mr. Burke juſtified, plainly the firſt ſtep to that kind of popular interference, which was commenced in France, by exactly the ſame means, frequent calls upon the unthinking and uninſtructed. Gentlemen may ſuppoſe that they can guide this people, if they excite them.

* A convention is now called in the North by men who almoſt avow republican principles, and the deſire of a Revolution, and the pretext uſed, to induce the people to enter into the meaſure, is that the *Catholics had a Convention.*

They

They err, they may talk of rights of election and corruptions in adminiſtration, but the chief grievance of a man, taken from the occupations of day labour, is, that he muſt return to them, and this he will redreſs, if he can, before any other.

When I view theſe things, and ſee the ſon of Edmund Burke at the head of the proceeding; I ſtand petrified with amazement; perhaps he too may wiſh to try his hand, at another popular invective; as the declarations of the father in the buſineſs of America, have been ſtrained to juſtify the popular enormities of France; ſo may the conduct of the ſon apologize for future proceedings in this kingdom, and when to gratify ſome private piques he has deſtroyed the dams and barriers, and that the torrent becomes irreſiſtible, either one or the other may glean a crop of laurels, by writing againſt the revolution of Ireland; the gentlemen only make work for themſelves, as glaziers, on a rejoicing day, ſend abroad their boys, to break the Quaker's windows.

I bewail the condition of human nature, which condemns a great portion of mankind to inequality; but I am convinced, that, inequality, perhaps not in the exact degree, which exiſts at preſent in Ireland, for we have not yet recovered the effect of the commercial reſtrictions, but in a great degree, is neceſſary to human happineſs; that if it did not exiſt, we muſt run into a ſtate of nature, without rule or reaſon; that in civil ſociety the poor, who are the leaſt favored, are better ſituated, than any whatever, in a ſtate of nature; for theſe reaſons, I love order,

and

I reprobate the men, who endeavour to violate it; I do not like to ſee the herdſmen, and the ploughmen, and the ſpademen ſummoned, under the privy ſeal of Mr. Burke or Mr. Byrne, to proceed to elections and re-elections; becauſe I know, that the courſe of events muſt ſpeedily relieve them; and I alſo know that, if they be forced into politics, they may adopt a ſummary plan; a ſhort-cut to redreſs, which would retard the improvement of the kingdom, and prove ultimately deſtructive to themſelves, beſides the individual miſery which would mean time be ſhowered upon private families. And, whether all this miſchief be threatened, by the principles of Tom Paine, adopted in malecontent ſocieties; or by the counſels of Mr. Burke inſtigating fooliſh citizens to enter upon meaſures, of which they do not underſtand the tendency; I condemn the act, not the action; indifferent, whether America or England has given birth to the inſanity.

Mr. Burke with the King and Monarchy in his mouth; and other perſons* with republicaniſm for their object, both unite in one opinion, that a

 ſpirit

* Republican is, in my opinion, an appellation ſo unworthy, when applied to men who know the advantages of a mixed monarchy, and deſire to deſtroy that happy form; that I do not affix it upon any man; but thoſe I conceive to be directly or indirectly, republicans and levellers; who project the arming of perſons unable to arm themſelves; or who endeavouring to inflame the feelings of the unreflecting part of the community, prompt them to perſonal, and premature, and therefore improper exertion. If any well meaning man feels himſelf involved in this cenſure; let him weigh the tendency of his actions, and the effect of ſimilar means uſed elſewhere; an honeſt man ſuperior to falſe punctilio, will never think it too late to retract or alter; I know there are ſome, of pure integrity, engaged in ſtrong meaſures at preſent. I offer this remark to their conſideration. Fayette is a character beyond

ſpirit of political enquiry, political action, and political curioſity, ought to be propagated thro' the country; (this was alſo the conduct of the Jacobin club at Paris, who originally did not more than Mr. Burke or the United Iriſhmen * preach rank republicaniſm); that both will ſucceed in the point, in which both coincide, I very little doubt; but to my poor underſtanding, it appears not leſs obvious, that Mr. Burke will ſhortly be left behind, hobbling with his unweildy weight of loyalty upon his ſhoulders. For altho', monarchy is a form of government, as much preferable to republicaniſm, as civil ſociety is, to the ſtate of man in ſavage life; yet by reflection, alone do we learn the advantages of reſtraint; a giddy mob once let looſe, will not take breathing time to attend to reaſon. But altho' they cannot reaſon back, for that is complex, and a work of difficulty; they will adopt, a plainer method, and reaſon forward; when we have acoutred honeſt John or Pat in a green coat, and a large hat, with a proper proviſion of muſket and cartridges, the *National Volunteer* mayhap will aſk his officer, what he is to fight for? for liberty and equality, as deſcribed by the United Iriſhmen; good, but will homeſpun Paddy take the Captain's definition? will he think of the unequal repreſentation of the

beyond ſuſpicion; did he ſerve his country, by lending the ſanction of his name to the early proceedings of France? Certainly he did not, for the old monarchy of France was better than the preſent republic; it made more men happy, and fewer unhappy.

* This Society has ſince this letter was prepared for the preſs, expreſſed their ſatisfaction at the King's recommendation of the Catholics; I give them credit for this conduct, but as my objection, is to the effect of their proceedings on their public mind, not to the motives, which for aught I know may be very good, I have not altered my remark.

peop'e,

people, when he feels the unequal diſtribution of property? and expoſe his life for the ſhadow, when his ſword can give him the ſubſtance? I deliver very ſimple reaſon, who can anſwer for the conduct of the populace, when once brought into action? And is it, or is it not, the tendency of Mr. Byrne's circular letter, combined with ſeveral ſubſequent proceedings to bring them into action? When I glance over the entire ſeries, it appears to me, that the plan of election propoſed by the Sub-Committee of the Catholics of Ireland, was with a view to facilitate the future introduction of bolder meaſures; perhaps to feel the pulſe of the people, but certainly to familiarize them to perſonal interpoſition; it is not neceſſary, that every man who participated in the act, ſhould have been an accomplice in the intention; men, of little political reflection may have been ſeduced by plauſible pretexts, into meaſures, of which the purport was not within their comprehenſion.

Bread is an article ſtill of great conſumption, and which, before the want of an equal repreſentation of the people had been felt, was eſteemed chief in the catalogue of human neceſſities; for the former, men in all ages have been juſt as prone to fight, as the citizens of Belfaſt are at preſent for the latter. Unfortunately for all great political ſpeculators, thiſtles, brambles, and daiſies, the ſpontaneous gifts of nature, make rather an unpleaſant ſort of diet; and corn, the nouriſhment moſt to be relied on, will not come without cultvation. Of this corn, there are two deſcriptions; one, by far the greater proportion, which under the name of rent, goes to certain indolent men, who by deſcent or acquiſition have obtained dominion over the ſoil, and who enjoy it, according to the

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forms of civil ſociety; the other, which is the leſſer ſhare, goes under the ſame ſocial order to the ſuſtenance of the leſs noiſy ſlaves, who have of all others moſt reaſon to be uneaſy. Of theſe two claſſes, the former will not much reliſh, leaving their bottles and glaſſes; their ſnug fire-ſides, and their wives and miſtreſſes, to pay to mother earth this neceſſary duty of ſowing and tilling; and the latter, when they become *Citizen Soldiers*, and have their attention quite occupied, with their new maſters, the United Iriſhmen and National Convention, will neither be diſpoſed to toil for the indolence of their landlords; nor have leiſure to raiſe their own ſubſiſtence. I once knew a man, who, having reaſon to apprehend the miniſtry of Jack Ketch, put his feelings to the teſt of two minutes ſuſpenſion; in order that the calamities of tumultuous reform, may not come unawares upon us, ſuppoſe the gentlemen, who deſire a Convention, a Revolution, and a Republic, would make, for the ſervice of *their* country, a ſlight experiment of the ſame nature; let them remit a year's profits, if they be in trade; one year's rent, if their fortunes be in land; a year's fees to their clients, if men of profeſſion; and a year's intereſt to their creditors, if they be monied capitaliſts; when they have tried their patience for twelve months, I will not for one refuſe them permiſſion to protract the experiment; but until I procure poſitive proof of the poſſibility of living on the air like wild aſſes, I will not voluntarily embrace this life; and I will unite with my neighbours in puniſhing with the full force of the law, every ſpeculator, who would make it, compulſory on me to do ſo.

That

That there are men in this kingdom, who in the name of equal repreſentation, and under the guiſe of liberality to the Catholics, and ſome too among the Catholics themſelves endeavour to goad this country to a ſtate of tumult, or what is equally bad a Convention leading to a Republic, is placed beyond all doubt; many of them indeed are loud in their profeſſion of peace and loyalty, as ladies diſpoſed to compliance, often are the moſt declamatory about virtue; that theſe criminal abſurdities have not ſpread in the nation, is no doubt true; but it is true that they have reached the nation; for we ſee the United Iriſhmen openly call to arms; and the Jacobins of Belfaſt openly invite to a National Convention; and we ſee the Roman Catholics directed into a line of conduct, which, if any thing can obſtruct their relief, ſeems calculated to produce that effect. The apparent ſucceſs of theſe meaſures, may give them a temporary eclat, in the eyes of thoſe who do not reflect; but a thinking man will ſtill pronounce, that thoſe perſons were either weak or wicked, who riſqued the cauſe and fate of a people upon a die, as has been done ſo often by the Dublin leaders. Dumourier, and the embarraſſment of the Cabinet ſaved them; but they are yet to be exculpated from the crime of having gone forward never conciliating, and ever offending; pending the negociation with the King, a merchant in this town* one of the managers, who forces himſelf forward, preſided at a meeting where among other *loyal and patriotic*, toaſts, the following were drank, "the canon law

* Mr. Randal M'Donnel. I have taken my intelligence from the public Newſpapers.

of

of the people," " the blunders of adminiſtration, and may they be continued," " the memory of Ankarſtroom, who oppoſed tyranny by the only means left to a ſlave." Now it happens accidentally, that the late King of Sweden ſuffered, in conſequence of having done an act, very ſimilar to that which our Sovereign was at the time of theſe toaſts ſolicited to perform, and which ſollicitation he has ſince complied with; he joined with his people againſt his Ariſtocracy; the members of the latter in conſequence murdered him, and ſuch is the folly and ignorance of theſe politicians, that this perſon, who had ſet his name to a petition praying the King of Ireland, to imitate the King of Sweden, lends alſo his name, to a public approbation of the aſſaſſin of the latter. I ſee the game very clearly, the Roman Catholics are the great body of the nation; among them are ſome of the moſt cool men in Ireland; they are aware how civil war afflicted their forefathers; the crown protected them a long time, when their northren friends were bitter perſecutors; they are free from the fanatical enthuſiaſm of the diſſenting ſects; and have not a little family and friendly intercourſe with the French emigrants; this aroſe from the connection with France, which the ſavage popery laws compelled them to form, and every Catholic of education in the kingdom avows, that when driven from home he was received with tenderneſs by what is now, the mendicant nobility of France, and aſſiduouſly inſtructed by what is now its mendicant clergy.*

It will be neceſſary to break all theſe habits before the people can be perſuaded, that Liberty and

* The city Catholics, who celebrated the ſucceſſes of the French have on imputation on the ſcore of ingratitude, as they were not included in the benefits conferred by France on this country

Equality

Equality are preferable to freedom and ſettlement *. For this purpoſe the Catholic queſtion is ſnatched at; the public had already taken it up; this circumſtance joined to the indiſputable propriety of the object, rendered it an excellent material to work on.

Certainly never was there a greater ſurpriſe upon the public mind, than this ſudden appearance of the Catholic queſtion; nine tenths of the Proteſtants of Ireland conſidered the Catholics, as doomed by nature to eternal vaſſalage. Few had ever turned the matter in their minds, and, by far the greater part were ſo politically ignorant, that to extend the franchiſe to the Catholics, ſeemed to them nothing leſs, than a ſurrender of civil and religious li-

* There is another tie on the Catholics, when they received permiſſion to acquire land in this country, they bound themſelves by what I conceive a very ſilly oath, but which is not therefore the leſs obligatory, to his Majeſty and his government; the condition on the ſide of the ſtate was, to add the rights of property, to thoſe of perſonal ſecurity, enjoyed previouſly: on the ſide of thoſe Catholics who take the oath, the condition is, that in conſequence of theſe conceſſions, they will bear true allegiance to the King, &c. and defend him to the utmoſt of their power, (vide oath) againſt all foreign and domeſtic enemies, &c. Thus they are effectually precluded, while the ſtate protects them in the enjoyment of theſe rights, from ſeeking any advantage, by other means, than thoſe of argument and influence; I admit, that if an attempt were made to repeal the former relaxing ſtatutes, this obligation would be diſſolved, but until that event take place, no Catholic without perjury can violate it; and therefore I preſume Mr. Randal M'Donnel with his murder of a King, and "*Canon law of the people*," will not much be reliſhed by thoſe of his communion, who underſtand the nature of an oath and reſpect its obligations.

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berty, the introduction of a Papal government, and the abolition of Proteſtantiſm. To this intemperance of falſely aſſociated ideas was added another ariſing from the uſual reluctance to yield any ſpecies of pre-eminence; the Proteſtants had flattered themſelves for a length of time on their political maſtery; they could not at firſt perceive how much it is their intereſt to ſacrifice the bauble; nor that the cool, opulent, and reflecting Catholics of the preſent day ſhould not have been treated, like the vanquiſhed Jacobites and bigots of the laſt century. Anger and indignation ever ariſe at firſt, when men are ſummoned to reduce themſelves, from what, to them ſeems a ſituation of ſuperiority; but, if reaſon were permitted to re-aſſume her place, the firſt irritation being paſt away, theſe emotions would have ſubſided. If the Catholic leaders deſigned to carry their queſtion by political influence, rather than by means which ought to be equally formidable, to every man of every perſuaſion, they would have endeavoured firſt to conciliate the Proteſtant people; if they were men of underſtanding they would have made allowance for natural circumſtances, and not concluded from the firſt warmth of expreſſion, that the repugnance would prove perpetual; they would have known, that, an equitable demand, made by the joint influence of a great proportion of property, and a great over pro-

portion of

population, could not long be reſiſted in a country, in which diſcuſſion is unreſtricted; and could be obſtructed alone, by the complication of means, that intimidate the moderate, with an end, that muſt gratify the reflecting. This has been the caſe; every ſtep taken by the agents in the Catholic buſineſs, has been the moſt unconciliatory* poſſible. This unſuitable complication of their leaders, ſeems to me to be overlooked by the great Catholic body; all other conſiderations are loſt in their earneſtneſs to attain the object; but it operates with full force on the Proteſtants; they conſidering the proceedings ſolely, as they relate to the quiet of the country, dreaded to commit any kind of power to men, whoſe firſt proceedings ſeem to be ingrafted on thoſe of France, and who follow ſome and adhere to others, of whom the declarations and actions are hoſtile to the conſtitution. If the Proteſtant people cannot refuſe, yet they can do a vaſt deal, they can concede handſomely and liberally, and this is worth the pains of cool ſolicitation; nor is it to be inferred, from any thing, which has yet appeared, that they would not have done ſo; let us reflect, that the queſtion is not of eighteen

 months

* I limit this to the metropolis, which appears to me to have been continually marring the effect, of the ſenſible and gentleman-like conduct of the country. Succeſs does not vary my opinion, the good fortune of a gameſter neither proves integrity or wiſdom.

months ſtanding, the progreſs which it has made by mere internal evidence, gives room to ſuppoſe, that, if the oſtenſible members of the Catholic party had endeavoured to ſoothe, perſuade or influence, natural juſtice, thus aided, would have procured the active co-operation of the majority of independant Proteſtants; at preſent the moſt ſtrenuous are only acquieſcing.* The cauſe was not deſperate, but theſe perſons acted, as if it were ſo. All its natural reſcources have been neglected, and the juſt, the reaſonable, the irreſiſtable demand of the Catholics, walks thro' the land, with republicaniſm on its right hand, recrimination on its left; aſperity its weapon, and its hope intemperance; or elſe the great national queſtion is linked as a pinnace, to the deteſted, and deteſtable bark of convention—revolutioniſts; thus the Proteſtants are not permitted to conſider the matter ſoberly; thus, the beſt, and wiſeſt of the Catholics are ſcared from their own cauſe. Thus, the Catholics in deſpair of ſucceſs, irritated at the oppoſition made to their equitable requeſt, and overlooking the real cauſes of that oppoſition, may be forced from their love of order, and ſeduced to unite in, or countenance the proceedings of men, whom I will not call reformers, becauſe, honeſt reform is the pride, of him who undertakes

* Except Belfaſt, which has injured its credit by the madneſs of its late proceedings, and the wickedneſs of the Northern Star.

dertakes it. And I cannot aſſimilate to any thing wiſe or honourable, the perſons who congratulate republican France, and propoſe for imitation her pantomime government, and tragi-comic conduct; France, the butcher of honor, of juſtice, and of religion; ſmeared with the blood, and loaded with the imprecations of thouſands; nor can I approve of thoſe, even with Mr. Fox in their boſom, who rejoice at her ſucceſs, whilſt every victory is checquered with a maſſacre, and every laurel has its correſpondent cypreſs.

What can a man of reaſon, diſcover praiſe-worthy in the preſent condition of France? what model for the conduct of civilized ſociety? The uncontrouled, nay the licenſed brutality of the *ſovereign people*: the entire ſubverſion of order; the lamp-poſt impending over every man, whilſt treaſon is undefined, and the interpretation of conduct capricious; * each year producing a new race of legiſlators, and theſe butchered annually by their ſucceſſors; the one bloody, wave eternally reaching and ingulphing, that which had floated before it. Fayette, the author of gallic freedom, publickly proſcribed; Clermont Tonnerre, publicly murdered; Lally, the firſt of the nobility who reſigned the privi-

 leges

* It is worthy notice, that, amidſt ſo many maſſacres, the King of France is the only perſon, who has been arraigned for ſhedding the blood of the citizens; of which crime, he only perhaps, is innocent.

leges of his order; Montmorenci, who gave it the final blow, both, mendicants and exiles; Barnave, who ſmiled at the murder of Berthier, in priſon, I believe, alſo murdered*; every man puniſhed in proportion as he has ſerved the ſtate; becauſe in that proportion, he is formidable to his competitors in popularity. The king, Heavens! what a reward for royal condeſcenſion; he whom St. Etienne, (no partial obſerver,) repreſents full of affection and good intentions to his people; he who refuſed his ſanction to Bouille, becauſe he would not ſhed the blood of his ſubjects; confeſſedly the beſt monarch France has ſeen ſince Henry IVth. and admirably calculated to make his people happy; behold that monarch expiating his benevolence, by ſufferings more ſevere than ten thouſand deaths; fortunate if ere this the final cataſtrophe of diſgrace and calamity, has bleſſed him by the termination of his miſery, and withdrawn from his view, the blackeſt ſcene of human ingratitude, which ever yet has been exhibited.

God!

* Petion and the Patriots of laſt year, are now in diſgrace; every new queſtion makes a new generation of Patriots, and ſends the former one to the lamp-poſt; warned by France, it muſt be allowed to be wiſdom, not leſs than honeſty henceforward, not to goad the public mind to ſtrong meaſures, but rather to turn it from ſuch proceedings, or to reſiſt them.

God! have I lived to ſee the day, when Ireland is ſummoned to emulate this character; when, the ſucceſs, of theſe exterminating ruffians, is a public cauſe of congratulation and thankſgivings. When inſtead of that general gloom and mourning which ought to overſpread all civilized ſociety, ſober citizens have been compelled to illuminate their houſes; no, ſuch are not the genuine ſentiments of my country; of honeſt, loyal, affectionate Ireland; repeal your curſed code of oppreſſion, its iron hand alone extorts theſe plaudits to triumphant butchery, and falſifies the ſterling feelings of an Iriſhman.

For the purpoſe above ſtated, (to ſeduce that people into a republican convention) the Roman Catholic buſineſs is conducted intemperately; for by this means the Proteſtants, eſpecially the members of both houſes, are detained in a ſtate of irritation, and the government may be unwilling to offend them; and adminiſtration itſelf is inſulted, leſt it may take a whim of compliance; and premature meaſures are preſſed upon the public, becauſe the feelings of men, perhaps the infirmities, working in the minds of perſons in power, may hurry them to ſome ſally of authority, or into ſullenneſs, or into refuſal; for this, the faults of the Proteſtants, who have declared themſelves, (and they merit reprehenſion) are not permitted to repoſe, but they are by the conduct of the Catholics themſelves

themſelves bound irrevocably, to the ſilly declarations of laſt ſummer; for this, the king's government in Ireland is flouted, and men of the firſt condition held up to daily reprobation, not even a poſſibility left to them, to vary their opinion with any ſhew of decency; for this, the deputies of the Iriſh Catholics, go three hundred miles out of their road, that they may be hauled thro' Belfaſt, and ſhouted thro' Scotland; the latter not in a very quiet ſtate; the former, the hot-bed of ſedition, the nurſery of levelling and and republican theories. That thus arriving at St. James's, covered with the puddle of their rights of man excurſion, the king might have poſſibly been provoked to receive with coldneſs, the addreſs of ſuch ungracious Ambaſſadors; fortunately the benignity of the king, and the wiſdom of his adviſers, rendered it impoſible, to weaken the loyalty of the Catholics, by repreſenting his Majeſty indiſpoſed to their claims. From the throne, the matter is, as of right it ſhould be, referred back to parliament; that is to the Iriſh government; all the principal members of which, the Catholic chiefs have, as if with ſtudied anxiety, endeavoured to alienate.

Among the meaſures, which I cenſure, as unconciliatory and tending to alienate I place foremoſt, the late affectation of neglecting the government

ment of Ireland ; it would have been juſtifiable to have done ſo only in the caſe, that, the Lord Lieutenant had refuſed to tranſmit, the petition of the Catholics; this he neither did, nor could do, as he ſhould have anſwered with the ſevereſt penalty, for ſuch a breach of truſt to his ſovereign, and to the people. I ſee no good purpoſe which the meaſure could have produced to the Catholics, and I ſee no reaſon to have adopted it; when ſuch a body, as the Catholics of Ireland, intimate a want of confidence in an officer of ſtate, they ſhould indeed have excellent grounds ; becauſe otherwiſe they impair the dignity, which ought to belong to them. It ſeems to me, from the vindication of the Catholics, lately publiſhed, that the gentlemen who implied an oblique cenſure upon the Earl of Weſtmoreland's adminiſtration, had no juſt reaſon to have done ſo ; that of courſe they have injured the credit and reſpectability of any repreſentation, they may make in future. And another effect of this miſconduct is, that the Catholic body is committed, againſt that parliament, to which they are ſuitors, and which has thanked his Majeſty for continuing the Earl of Weſtmoreland in the Iriſh government; I hazard here the conjecture of a plain man, unacquainted with, and far removed from adminiſtration ; it is highly probable, that by this act, the effect of the Catholic petition has been weakened,

weakened, and the recommendation in the king's ſpeech rendered leſs forcible, than otherwiſe, it would have been; it is reaſonable to ſuppoſe, that when a miniſter is not well treated, he may not exert himſelf for the advantage of thoſe, who had ſlighted him, exactly as he would have done, had he experienced a contrary conduct. A miniſter, who is alſo a man of honor, and ſuch I underſtand to be the character of Lord Weſtmoreland, will certainly do what duty dictates; but, if, inclination were thrown into the ſcale, would it blunt the action of duty? if thoſe feelings were ſoothed, in which the private, muſt mingle with the public man; would there have ariſen any new impediment to public ſervice? But this whimſical proceeding may eaſily be accounted for; the late meeting in Dublin, was not an equitable delegation of the Catholics of Ireland; a majority of the aſſembly conſiſted, as I am informed from excellent authority, not of perſons ſent immediately from the places they were ſuppoſed to repreſent, but of citizens of Dublin, very equivocally nominated; when theſe perſons offer a claim to the rights of of the Engliſh conſtitution, they deliver a ſentiment agreeable to the Catholics of Ireland, who all coincide in the wiſh; and twenty-four coal porters, taken indiſcriminately from Aſton's-Quay, would for this reaſon be ſupported in a ſimilar requiſition. In ſoliciting the right of ſuffrage,

theſe citizen repreſentatives deliver, what is agreeable to the Catholic body, and are therefore tolerated; but there is no aſſumption, more arrogant, or leſs founded, than their indefinite claim to bind the Catholics in all meaſures. Theſe men thus packed, and influenced by a junto in the metropolis, conſiſting of ſome rich men, who have the influence of their money; and ſome active men, who raiſe a party by the uſual means of canvas, were willing to indulge the vanity of their citizen ſtateſman, by a royal interview; if his ambition tended to this indulgence, the paſſion might have been ſatiated without committing a people; the king is not difficult of acceſs; it was not neceſſary to have rendered the Iriſh Catholics ridiculous, in order to procure an audience; an improvement in the art of rearing bullocks, or a diſh of peas, preſented in December, would have procured exactly the ſame degree of royal condeſcenſion.

Under the conduct of theſe men, the Catholics have abandoned all the natural reſources of their cauſe, argument, juſtice, utility to the country; and they have rendered all their hopes contingent upon, the continuance of the French victories: the French may, and very likely will be defeated; and the Gallic Republic will ere long, moſt probably fall to pieces; if either event

take place, they are at the mercy of thoſe perſons, whom they have inſulted; it is indeed to be preſumed, that his majeſty has interfered, from a principle of general, not temporary expediency; and a change of circumſtances will not therefore vary his deciſion; but to have proceeded more judiciouſly, would not have weakened the effects upon the royal boſom. The Catholics are poſtulants; this was a reaſon to be mild; they moreover had much to get, as their adverſaries had much to relinquiſh; additional inducements to preſerve good humour, all of which have been neglected. From the ſtate of the Proteſtants of Ireland, it was neceſſary to have given them leſſons of liberality; and they were preſented in lieu thereof, with blunt dogmas of intemperance; if the cauſe of the Catholics were not ſtrong in natural reſources, this management, muſt inevitably have proved fatal; it has recovered like a ſturdy patient, from the maltreatment of an unſkilful phyſician; however theſe great ſtates-men and politicians may yet have a riſing blow at it.

I proceed to the conduct of Lord Weſtmoreland's adminiſtration, with reſpect to the Catholics; I know that he paſſed one bill of relief, thro' a not very complying Houſe of Commons, and I know that his predeceſſors for ſome years back, when they touched at all on the Catholic affairs, paſſed bills

againſt

againſt that people; they were excluded from the bank, under Lord Temple; they were excluded from the School of Phyſic, the fire-arm bill paſſed, and the Gormanſton bill, only, did not paſs under the Duke of Rutland; under the Marquis of Buckingham, no new conceſſion. Beſides the agency of adminiſtration in paſſing the bill laſt year; it certainly was put to them, from an oppoſition member to clog the bill with a clauſe, which ſhould render it concluſive, and this propoſal the preſent miniſter, Mr. Hobart, rejected. But it is aſſerted *in the vindication of the committee*, which by the way removes not one charge againſt the Catholics; that, the miniſter of the Day received the firſt applications with coldneſs; here is the charge, a few lines lower down in the ſame pamphlet, ſtands the exculpation; "Not a ſingle member from any ſide of the houſe, could be procured to preſent their petition." And will any reaſonable man ſay that the King's miniſter, charged with the management of the King's buſineſs, was to have thruſt himſelf upon a forlorn hope, which oppoſition, who only riſqued the giddy breath of popularity, eſteemed too deſperate to advance on? Again, the ſoliciting Catholics, had ſevered themſelves from the uſual chiefs of their party; in this, I certainly applaud their ſpirit, and their foreſight; but yet it was, in the firſt appearance of the diſunion good grounds for declining to encourage, what was then apparently the

weaker party; and ſo it ſeems to have been conſidered, by the oppoſition members, when as, *the vindication aſſerts*, "the committee had not ſufficient influence to prevail on any member of parliament, to forward that application." Gentlemen may talk about duty and virtue, but every plain man, like you and me, knows that convenience operates moſt powerfully; any Miniſter who has exiſted in Ireland theſe fifty years back, would have endeavoured to avert, this colliſion of juſtice againſt prejudice from his adminiſtration; the ſtorm burſt under the preſent Lord Lieutenant, and I apprehend that he has conducted himſelf exactly, as, any of his predeceſſors would have done in ſimilar circumſtances, or perhaps rather more kindly, towards the Catholics. I do not juſtify, the combination of bigotry, and ſelf intereſt, which has been called the temper of the times; No, lend the fouleſt epithet to ſtigmatize the ruinous, deteſtable, unpatriotic folly; but ſix months ago, it was the general diſpoſition of thoſe, whom Parliament, and Adminiſtration could alone recognize as the people of Ireland, the Proteſtants. If the temper of the conſtituent body has changed, the conduct of the repreſentative body will vary likewiſe. But every man muſt acknowledge, that when the preſent miniſter declined giving hopes to the Catholics, it was the temper of the Iriſh Proteſtants, that he ſhould have done ſo; and when their petition was rejected, the folly of the rejecting

body,

body, only ſeconded the folly of the nation. I conclude this from many circumſtances; firſt becauſe many bodies of Proteſtants certified that they were pleaſed at the rejection; and ſecondly becauſe not one cenſured it; and thirdly becauſe, ſave only the Town of Belfaſt, no collective body of Proteſtants until very lately, made the ſmalleſt feint in favor of their countrymen. I obſerve that within a little time paſt, ſome reſolutions have come from the Proteſtants of Cork, Tipperary and Fermanagh.

Whilſt the oppoſition has been now for ſome years back, amuſing the public with a place bill, and a penſion bill, and a reſponſibility bill, meaſures which in point of national utility, bear no more proportion to the Catholic queſtion, than a drop of water to the Ocean, they never once have entered upon this great buſineſs. In the year 1782, when we got a coronet for a gouty crutch, a conſtitution for an unconſtituted people; why did not the ſame ſuperior mind direct the attention of the public to the Catholics? what a field for the talents of that luminary! We muſt not preſume, that the excellent heads in oppoſition, were only enlightened in the laſt year, to the intereſts of their country; it is obvious from the preſent events that the excluſion of the Catholics in 1782, left the conſtitution incomplete; and for this reaſon alone public buſineſs has not gone on ſo well, as might

might have been expected, in conſequence, of the apparently important acquiſition, we made at that period; this circumſtance muſt have been foreſeen by the leaders at that time, but could not have been prevented; for ſuch was the bigotry of the Proteſtants, that if Mr. Grattan had mingled the Catholic emancipation with the other public advantages, which he labored to acquire, the entire work would have been fruſtrated. If he did not by bringing forward the Catholic emancipation in 1782, when he effected ſo much, complete the edifice of Iriſh freedom; if the queſtion was even rejected about that time, when advanced by Mr. Jones; if it was ſuffered to moulder a few years after, when advanced by Sir Patrick Bellew; if it was rejected at the convention; if it was ſuffered to the preſent day, to lie dormant, by an oppoſition vigilant to ſeize occaſions, for embarraſſing adminiſtration; can a miniſter be cenſured for yielding to the united inclination, of the Proteſtants to reſiſt, and the Catholics not to urge very ſtrenuouſly; and for not encumbering his adminiſtration by a meaſure, which would have certainly drawn the firſt propoſer into a neſt of Hornets? I think the Iriſh adminiſtration did a great deal; it received every man, who brought a propoſal on behalf of the Catholics. It made no effort, by holding out falſe hopes to

trick

trick itſelf into popularity; It exerted its influence to open the Bar, and left members free to vote for the franchiſe, this was ſupported by ſome gentlemen, who have places, and others who are adherents of adminiſtration. It could not do more; members who think their intereſts immediately involved in the Catholic emancipation, may lend an occaſional vote upon ſmall queſtions, but they would not ſell the fee, of their Parliamentary importance. The Catholics took no ſteps to conciliate theſe perſons, and then they blame that adminiſtration, whom every hour they inſult, becauſe it has not travelled out of its way, to make proſelytes for theſe bullies. If the Proteſtants have been univerſally adverſe to give the franchiſe to the Catholics, Lord Weſtmoreland's adminiſtration deſerves great gratitude from the latter. It appears to me that it ſtemmed the torrent of bigotry, as much as poſſible; and only yielded, where the current was irreſiſtible; this temper has now changed, but ſurely it is not juſt, to arraign that adminiſtration for illiberality this year, who were cenſured in the laſt for exceſſive compliance. To render the Lord Lieutenant and his Secretary, reſponſible, for ſteps taken, before the revolution in the public mind; and when they were under the neceſſity of conforming to a contrary ſentiment, is

more

more prepoſterous, not to ſay worſe, than the attempt to puniſh the King of France for orders iſſued, when the ſtate of his country left him no other manner of iſſuing orders, than as an arbitrary monarch. Wherefore then has Lord Weſtmoreland been calumniated? becauſe individual ambition aſpired to the honor of a royal interview, and it was neceſſary, as a colour for the ſingular proceeding, to repreſent the government of this kingdom, in a ſtate of miſdemeanor to the Catholics. If the charge had been founded, it was not for the intereſt of the Catholic body to advance it, at this moment; as I have demonſtrated it unfounded; the reſpectability of the body, which ſeemed to ſanction the charge, is injured.—The very great ferment excited in Parliament, ſince the miniſters have declared for the Catholics, and the deſperate ſteps taken by thoſe, who have ever appeared the enemies of that body in order to embarraſs government, fully demonſtrate, how dangerous was the attempt, to introduce this buſineſs, before the public mind was prepared, that of the Proteſtants to yield, that of the Catholics to inſiſt; and how unreaſonable was the expectation that any miniſter, would have hazarded the perilous enterprize.

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END of the SECOND LETTER.